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SUBJECT: DAILY SUMMARY OF JAPANESE PRESS 01/28/10

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(1) MOFA official denies non-mention of Japan in President Obama's state-of-the-union address sign of "taking Japan lightly"

JIJI.COM (Full)
12:58, January 28, 2010

U.S. President Barack Obama's first state-of-the-union address placed emphasis on employment, economic measures, and other domestic issues, as well as the "war on terrorism" in Afghanistan and did not mention Japan, with which the gap over the issue of the relocation of U.S. Forces' Futenma Air Station is widening. Commenting on this on Jan. 28, a senior Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) official denied that this is a sign of the U.S.'s "taking Japan lightly." He said: "The state-of-the-union address is focused on domestic issues in the U.S. This has nothing to do with the Futenma issue."

This MOFA official cited the President's strong warning to North Korea and Iran on their ongoing efforts to develop nuclear arms and stressed that "he did not mention regions where there are no outstanding issues, which means that Japan is not a problem." Another senior MOFA official pointed out that "the President's interest is in the domestic employment issue."

The government notes that the President indicated his intent to tackle global issues such as world economic recovery, prevention of global warming, and nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation, and plans to deepen Japan-U.S. cooperation in these areas. A government source said: "Japan will also cooperate for the success of the

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nuclear security summit (to be held in Washington in April)."

(2) PM Hatoyama: President Obama might have misunderstood his words "trust me"

JIJI.COM (Full)
13:21, January 28, 2010

At the House of Councillors Budget Committee on the morning of Jan. 28, Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama commented on his words "trust me," which he told President Barack Obama at their summit meeting last November. He said: "I meant to ask him to trust me, but I am not sure how he interpreted it. I might have sowed a certain degree of misunderstanding." This was in response to a question from the Liberal Democratic Party's Ichita Yamamoto.

President Obama demanded the early implementation of the Japan-U.S. agreement on the issue of the relocation of U.S. Forces' Futenma Air Station (in Ginowan City, Okinawa) at the summit. The U.S. side reportedly interpreted Hatoyama's words to mean his acceptance of the existing relocation plan and has been increasingly disappointed with his efforts to reconsider the relocation site.

(3) Former Deputy National Security Advisor Crouch worries important issues being put on the back burner

ASAHI (Page 10) (Full)
January 28, 2010

Jack D. Crouch, former deputy U.S. presidential assistant (for national security affairs), now visiting Japan at the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, gave an interview to the Asahi Shimbun yesterday. During the interview, Crouch said that the Futenma issue should be resolved as quickly as possible because there will be "an opportunity cost (loss of an opportunity)" if important issues between the two countries are put on the back burner. Crouch also said, "Compared with the question of how to respond to the rise of China, the base issue is a small matter." As tasks to which Japan and the United States should give priority, he cited building a lasting security framework in Asia including China, preparing for change on the Korean Peninsula, global-scale humanitarian-aid activities, and the like.

Crouch said that for resolving the Futenma issue "patience and the

reaffirmation of the positions of both sides are required." He added: "Experts from the two countries, rather than politicians, should hold discussions to chose the best of option ."

(4) Commentary on Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirano's remarks on local consent, legal procedures in relation to Futenma relocation site

SANKEI (Top play) (Full)
January 28, 2010

Hiroyuki Kano

Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano is under fire for talking repeatedly about the possibility of a legal solution if the consent of the local government is not obtained for the relocation of the U.S. forces' Futenma Air Station. It is believed that this is meant to retain the current plan to relocate the Futenma base to the coastal area of Camp Schwab (in Henoko, Nago City) as an option

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after an opponent to the relocation won in the Nago mayoral election in Okinawa and to keep a free hand for Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama. Yet, it is not clear if Hatoyama is aware of the trouble his top aide is going through. He simply kept repeating at the House of Councillors Budget Committee on Jan. 27 that he will "definitely identify a relocation site by the end of May." It remains uncertain if this controversy can be settled.

"Agreement with whom?"

After Susumu Inamine, an opponent of Henoko relocation, won in the Nago election on Jan. 24, Hirano has been bombarded with questions on the "popular will" expressed in the mayoral election at his news conferences day in and day out. When asked at a news conference on Jan. 27 about his earlier statement that the relocation process will be possible even without the consent of the local government, he reached the height of his irritation, stating: "You talk about agreement with the local government, but agreement with whom? This is not an issue that requires the consent of every single party to carry out."

Hirano, who chairs the Okinawa base issues examination committee of the government and the ruling parties, is now painfully aware of the difficulty of finding a new relocation site as an alternative to the existing relocation plan.

The U.S. forces' Kadena Air Base (straddling the towns of Kadena and Chatan and Okinawa City) and Shimojishima (in Miyakojima City) have emerged as possible choices, but these are not feasible plans due to local opposition.

Democratic Party of Japan House of Representatives member Seishu Makino, who is close to Hatoyama, has been visiting the island of Tokunoshima in the Amami islands in Kagoshima Prefecture since November, sounding out the three town mayors there on accepting Futenma's relocation. However, the mayors reportedly conveyed their rejection of the plan on Jan. 27.

Even if a relocation site can be found, it is unlikely that the U.S. government, which is demanding the implementation of the current plan, will readily accede to a new one.

A simple fact

Hirano has mentioned taking legal steps for the relocation regardless of the local government's wishes because he now realizes the simple fact that Futenma relocation is "an issue affecting Japan's security" (in his own words). If relocation becomes impossible due to local opposition, the Japan-U.S. security alliance will become unstable.

On the other hand, there is growing criticism in the ruling parties that "(Hirano's) repeating his statements on purpose is unacceptable. The Prime Minister should reprimand him," according to Social Democratic Party House of Representatives member Kantoku Teruya.

Aware that he has drawn a lot of flak, when Hirano was asked about the proposal to relocate the Futenma base to Tokunoshima at his news conference, he said: "I am keenly aware of the weight my words carry, so I will refrain from making comments."

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Unlike Hirano, the Prime Minister continued to wag his tongue rather freely on Jan. 27. He said in the morning that he "has no intention to deny" the Tokunoshima proposal, which could be interpreted as an admission (that the proposal is being pushed). However, he went back on his own words in the evening, perhaps out of realization that the proposal was opposed by the local mayors.

He said: "I have no knowledge of this matter. I should refrain from mentioning any particular island or town."

(5) On Futenma relocation issue, chief cabinet secretary says "agreement" is unnecessary but seeks "understanding"

MAINICHI (Page 2) (Full)
January 28, 2010

Over the relocation of the U.S. Marine Corps' Futenma Air Station in Ginowan City, Okinawa Prefecture, Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirofumi Hirano has made controversial remarks, evoking criticism in succession despite Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama's effort to calm down the situation. Meanwhile, it was revealed yesterday that Hirano was secretly considering the island of Tokunoshima in Kagoshima Prefecture as a possible relocation site for the Futenma facility. The victory in the recent Nago mayoral election of the candidate who opposes the existing Futenma plan has sown discord in the Hatoyama administration.

Reporter: "No matter which location is picked as the relocation site, I think it is necessary to obtain consent from the local government to host the alternative base."

Hirano: "It is absolutely necessary to seek understanding (from the concerned local governments)."

Reporter: "Do you mean (it is unnecessary to elicit) consent from the city mayor or town mayors involved?"

Hirano: What is your definition of consent?

In a press conference yesterday morning, the exchange of words between Hirano and reporters over "consent" and "understanding" went on and on. The exchange finally ended with Hirano saying, "you may interpret it in that way," in replying to a question by a reporter asking if Hirano has used the expression "consent" for a plan that legally requires approval (from the concerned persons, including the Okinawa governor) and "understanding" for a plan that does not.

Bearing in mind necessary legal procedures for relocating the facility, Hirano has been overly obsessed with the difference in meaning between "consent" and "understanding." If the existing plan to move the facility to a coastal area of U.S. Camp Schwab in the Henoko district of Nago City is implemented, the Okinawa governor's approval for reclamation work will become necessary under the Public Water Body Reclamation Law, but approval from the Nago mayor will be unnecessary. In the case of building the facility on land, approval from neither the mayor nor governor is necessary.

Hirano said on the 26: "The issue could be settled by law (without local consent)." Many people criticized this remark as high-handed, but Hirano was keeping legal steps in mind. In the press conference on the 27th, Hirano said: "There are (such forcible means as expropriation of land) as a general argument." On the night of the

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26th, a senior government official ruled out the possibility of resorting to forcible means, saying: "(If the government takes

forcible steps,) the dispute between both sides will develop into one similar to the battle over Narita and will end miserably."

In a meeting of the House of Councillors Budget Committee yesterday afternoon, New Komeito President Natsuo Yamaguchi pointed out: "(Hirano's) remarks related to the popular will in the Nago mayoral election have been creating a stir. He should be more humble." Hirano replied: "The outcome of an election represents the popular will. We must seek understanding from the concerned local governments and push ahead with the issue." He thus was hard pressed to explain the true intention of his earlier remarks.

(6) Indictment of U.S. Army soldier: Three months too long; support for the bereaved family necessary

RYUKYU SHIMPO (Page 31) (Full)
January 28, 2010

On receiving the news that a U.S. Army staff sergeant, a suspect in a hit-and-run incident in Yomitan Village, was indicted yesterday on an additional charge of violation of the Road Traffic Law (hit-and-run), friends of Masakazu Hokama, 66, who died after the staff sergeant hit him while driving, looked relieved, with one friend saying, "Masakazu now can rest in peace." The indictment of the U.S. serviceman came after about three months after the accident occurred. Local residents and victims of incidents involving U.S. service personnel are saying that the process took too long, and are calling for a review of the Japan-U.S. Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). An official of the crime victims support organization pointed out the importance of providing support to the bereaved family in preparation for the trial.

Kiyoko Taira, 71, who grew up with Hokama, said as she mourned for him, "I can finally tell Masakazu about the indictment. It took a really long time. Whenever I passed by his house, I said in my head, 'Wait a little longer.' Masakazu now can rest in peace."

Yomitan Village Mayor Keizo Yasuda praised prosecutors, saying, "Overcoming the heavy barrier of the SOFA, I praise (prosecutors) for their efforts to be able to indict the U.S. soldier." At the same time, the mayor emphasized: "I want (suspect Clyde Gunn) to honestly admit his guilt and offer an apology to the bereaved family. A review of SOFA is absolutely necessary because hit-and-run incidents could occur in the future as well."

A company employee, 24, who was seriously injured in a hit-and-run incident by a U.S. military personnel last April in Urasoe City, voiced his doubts about the SOFA, saying, "Regardless of who - a Japanese or a U.S. soldier - commits a hit-and-run, the victim is hurt in a similar way. I wonder why it takes so much time for indictment only when a U.S. service personnel commits a hit-and-run. If Japanese people run down U.S. military personnel, we can't take refuge in the base. If they considered the SOFA from our point of view, they would understand that the agreement is unfair."

Yumi Kawamitsu, representative of the Okinawa Hidamari Association to Support Crime Victims, complained, saying, "I think the bereaved family has suffered for more than two months. They might have been overcome by a sense of helplessness because they couldn't do anything even though they knew who the perpetrator was. I wonder to

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what extent we are able to support the bereaved family. The U.S. serviceman was arrested and indicted, but the question is how the trial will turn out. The (suspect) must pay for his crime in which he took the life of a man."

(7) Interview with next Nippon Keidanren chairman Hiromasa Yonekura

NIKKEI (Page 3) (Full)
January 28, 2010

Takeshi Fujita, Davos

Hiromasa Yonekura, chairman of Sumitomo Chemical, who has been informally selected as the next chairman of the Japan Business

Federation (Nippon Keidanren), on Jan. 27 submitted to an interview with the Nikkei in Davos (in eastern Switzerland), where he is currently visiting. He said, "Japan's human resources are unusually excellent. We must realize a technology-oriented country, taking advantage of such resources." The following is the exchange of questions and answers.

-- What is your view of the government's growth strategy?

"It has yet to be fleshed out. I want the government to think about the possibilities for the future vision of Japan. Japan, which has no natural resources and which imports most of food it consumes, only has technology and ingenuity. We will work more boldly toward realizing Japan's growth strategy."

-- How are you going to build a relationship with the Democratic Party of Japan's (DPJ) administration?

"It is said that we were too close to the previous (Liberal Democratic Party = LDP) administration and now we too distant from the current (DPJ) administration. However, we have established (channels for) exchanges with Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama and many cabinet ministers. We are not distant from the DPJ administration. The principle for dealing with political parties should be policy-oriented. We will donate political funds to political parties with which we share the same views."

-- What is your view on the government goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by 25 percent by 2020?

"It is like trying to make the impossible possible. I wonder whether it can be achieved. Such a goal cannot be met unless unprecedented technology is developed. I am worried that adopting such goal might force the people to make wasteful efforts."

(8) Hiromasa Yonekura, chairman of Sumitomo Chemical, informally picked as next Nippon Keidanren chairman; cooperation with government holds key to climbing out of deflation

NIKKEI (Page 3) (Full)
January 28, 2010

The Japan Business Federation (Nippon Keidanren) on Jan. 27 held an informal meeting between the chairman and the vice chairmen. Participants informally decided to appoint Hiromasa Yonekura (72), chairman of Sumitomo Chemical and chairman of Nippon Keidanren's board of trustees, as successor to the incumbent Chairman Fujio Mitarai (74). Commenting on the appointment, Chairman Mitarai after

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the meeting told reporters, "(Mr. Yonekura) is an international figure who is in step with the times." Yonekura will take on the heavy responsibility of lobbying the Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ) administration, which distances itself from Nippon Keidanren, on Japan's growth strategy from the private sector's viewpoint. He will face many challenges, including formulating measures to curb global warming.

Yonekura will formally assume the post after a plenary meeting in late May. He will serve in the post for two terms or four years. Mitarai on the morning of the 20th telephoned him at home to ask him to take over the chairmanship. Yonekura's rich experience abroad and the length of his service in business circles were reportedly the deciding factors in his appointment. Mitarai said that he would, above all else, like to see him put the Japanese economy on a self-reliant recovery track driven by the private sector promptly. He then said, "To achieve that end, a growth strategy is important. I would like him to make progress on economic diplomacy in Asia." Stressing that Nippon Keidanren is a policy group, Mitarai pointed out, "The chairman's responsibility will also include drawing up policies on taxation reform, and fiscal and social security systems, which form the foundation of the state."

Business circles have been suffering a setback since the change in government last summer. Nippon Keidanren has been involved in policy-setting through the council on economic and fiscal policy

during the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) administration. However, (since the change in government), there have been an increasing number of cases in which the government passed over the Nippon Keidanren chairman when formulating growth strategies.

Tomojiro Morita, vice chairman and chairman of Dai-ichi Mutual Life Insurance Co. cited a challenge facing the Yonekura-led Nippon Keidanren: "Regardless of who becomes chairman, it will be difficult to handle relations with the new administration. However, it is necessary for the public and private sectors to work together in order to climb out of deflation." It is also important for the Nippon Keidanren chairman to rebuild channels with political and bureaucratic circles as well as to coordinate views within his own organization. For instance, the chairman will face the test of demonstrating leadership to unify economic circles regarding measures to curb global warming that cause discord among member companies with different interests.

(9) DPJ ahead of all other parties for upper house election

NIKKEI (Page 2) (Abridged)
January 28, 2010

Despite the declining popularity of the Hatoyama cabinet and the ruling Democratic Party of Japan in the Nihon Keizai Shimbun's latest public opinion survey, the leading opposition Liberal Democratic Party's public support rating was 24 PERCENT , almost unchanged from the 23 PERCENT rating in the last survey conducted last December. In the popularity ranking of political parties for this summer's election for the House of Councillors, the DPJ scored 31 PERCENT , with the LDP at 23 PERCENT . The poll results also revealed that the DPJ has sustained a blow from its "money-and-politics" problems, whereas the LDP was not prepared to respond to the public's criticism of the DPJ administration.

Among those in their 30s to 60s, more than 30 PERCENT said they

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would vote for the DPJ. Among those in their 20s and those aged 70 and over as well, the DPJ-oriented proportion was in the upper 20 PERCENT range. The LDP-oriented proportion was between 17 PERCENT and 19 PERCENT among those in their 20s to 50s, 26 PERCENT among those in their 60s, and 33 PERCENT among those aged 70 and over, showing that there is a tendency among older generations to support the LDP.

Among those with no particular party affiliation, 10 PERCENT answered that they would vote for the LDP, with 3 PERCENT saying they would vote for the DPJ. However, those "still undecided" accounted for 42 PERCENT . The future course of the swing votes is unclear.

Questions & Answers

(Figures are percentages. Parentheses denote results from the last survey conducted in December last year.)

Q: Do you support the Hatoyama cabinet?

Yes 45 (50)
No 47 (42)
Can't say (C/S) + don't know (D/K) 8 (8)

Q: Which political party do you support or prefer?

Democratic Party of Japan (DPJ or Minshuto) 42 (46)
Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) 24 (23)
New Komeito (NK) 3 (4)
Japanese Communist Party (JCP) 4 (2)
Social Democratic Party (SDP or Shaminto) 2 (2)
People's New Party (PNP or Kokumin Shinto) 0 (1)
Your Party (YP or Minna no To) 5 (2)
Reform Club (RC or Kaikaku Kurabu) 0 (0)
New Party Nippon (NPN or Shinto Nippon) 0 (0)
Other political parties 1 (1)
None 15 (15)

(Note) Percentages may not add up to 100 PERCENT in some cases due to rounding.

Polling methodology: The survey was taken Jan. 26-27 by Nikkei Research Inc. over the telephone on a random digit dialing (RDD) basis. For the survey, samples were chosen from among men and women aged 20 and over across the nation. A total of 1,370 households with one or more eligible voters were sampled, and answers were obtained from 886 persons (64.7 PERCENT).

ROOS